Portsmouth, Virginia Police Department
General Orders Manual

Body Armor			ADM	49
Effective:	03.12.12		3	pages
Supersedes:	New	CALEA: 41.3.5, 41.3.6		
APPROVED: **Edward G. Hargis, Chief of Police**				

PURPOSE: To provide officers with guidelines for the proper use and care of body armor.

POLICY: The Portsmouth Police Department strives to maximize officer safety through the use of body armor in combination with prescribed officer safety procedures. While body armor provides a significant level of protection, it is not a substitute for the observance of officer safety procedures.

DEFINITIONS:

Patrol/Field Activities: Regular duty assignments and/or tasks that place, or could reasonably place, officers in situations that require them to act in enforcement rather than administrative or support capacities.

PROCEDURES:

I. Body Armor Issuance

A. The Property Management Unit (PMU) will issue all officers agency approved body armor just prior to graduation from the Police Academy. The unit will also issue body armor to Animal Control Officers and Security Guards.

B. All issued body armor will comply with protective and related requirements prescribed under current National Institute of Justice standards. The Department will replace body armor failing to meet standards (e.g., expiration date).

C. The Police Department will replace damaged or worn body armor. If an officer requires replacement body armor due to his or her misuse or abuse of issued body armor, he or she will bear the cost of such replacement. (41.3.5)

II. Body armor use (41.3.5)

A. Officers will wear only department issued or approved body armor.

B. Recruit officers will wear body armor during both classroom and field training.

C. Officers assigned to uniformed functions, and non-uniformed sworn officers, are required to wear body armor while engaged in field activities both on and off-duty and during off-duty employment unless exempt as follows:

[redacted]

D. Every member of the department involved in pre-planned high risk situations such as the service of a search and/or arrest warrant regardless of the offense, whether or not an officer is a member of an entry team or serving in an assist capacity, will wear body armor. (41.3.6)

E. Every officer involved in a tactical field situation in which a reasonable threat of great bodily injury or death to an officer exists, or may develop, shall wear body armor. (41.3.6)

F. Any on-scene incident commander can mandate the wearing of body armor. (41.3.6)

G. The Chief of Police may, at his or her discretion, determine that the wearing of body armor is mandatory for any officer engaged in any assignment, whether in uniform or plain-clothes. In addition, the Chief of Police may, at his or her discretion, determine those specific circumstances, situations, or assignments in which the wearing of body armor is mandatory.

H. Officers normally assigned to administrative duties are authorized to wear the department issued tactical outer carrier vest when conducting field operations. The vest must contain the issued ballistic panels and plates, and officers must openly display a badge or other police identification.

I. [redacted]

J. Those officers or detectives who do not normally wear body armor will carry it in their police vehicles, out of sunlight, and have it available for immediate use. (41.3.5)

III. Body armor inspection

A. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that officers wear and maintain body armor as required by this policy through routine observation and periodic documented inspections.

B. Supervisors will conduct annual inspections of body armor to determine fit, cleanliness, and signs of damage, abuse or wear.

C. Officers are responsible for the proper storage, maintenance and care of body armor in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

D. Officers will report damage or excessive wear of ballistic panels, plates, or vest cover to their supervisor and to the PMU Sergeant.

IV. Responsibilities

A. The PMU Sergeant is responsible for monitoring technological advances in the body armor industry that may necessitate a change in department issued body armor.

B. The PMU is responsible for determining yearly needs based upon the expiration date of all issued vests and to ensure “expired” vests are replaced. The Unit will also make notifications to officers of vendor vest fittings.

C. The range master shall regularly assess weapons and ammunition currently in use, and the suitability of approved body armor to protect against those threats.

D. The range master shall maintain statistics on incidents where body armor has or has not protected our officers from harm, including traffic accidents.

Approved: _____
Edward G. Hargis, Chief of Police